

## CLAIMS

1. In a system for transferring thematic information over the Internet between a server and a client:

a source of vector graphics for different themes;

5 means for importing the vector graphics into the frames of an animation movie;

means for downloading the frames of the movie from the server to the client; and

means controlled by the client for selectively overlaying the frames to display different themes.

2. The system of Claim 1 wherein the themes include maps comprising an outline of a region and areas of different colors within the outline, and the system includes:

5 means for preparing a color-coded frame by drawing a polygon around one of the maps, drawing a straight line between each color transition along the outline and the polygon, erasing the outline and the straight lines, and filling in the areas between the straight lines with the colors from the areas of the map between those lines;

10 means for preparing a frame containing the outline of the region; and means for displaying the color-coded frame in a layer beneath a layer containing the outline, with the layer containing the outline masking off the colored areas outside the outline so that the map is displayed as comprising the areas of different colors in the shape of the region.

3. The system of Claim 3 further including means for displaying another layer containing the outline with the other layers so that the map is displayed with a visible outline of the region around the areas of different colors.

4. The system of Claim 2 including means for preparing a plurality of thematic frames which can be selectively displayed with the layer containing the outline to display different themes for the region.

5 5. The system of Claim 1 wherein the themes include a map of a geographic area with an icon displayed thereon representing a link to a location on the Internet from which a video clip containing information relating to the area can be downloaded, and the system includes means for downloading and playing the video clip upon selection of the icon.

5 6. The system of Claim 1 wherein the means for downloading the frames of the movie includes means for downloading the frames in a predetermined order, means for detecting a request for a frame by the client, and means for altering the order of the download to start downloading one or more frames immediately upon request by the client.

5 7. In a method of transferring thematic information over the Internet between a server and a client, the steps of:  
providing vector graphics for different themes;  
importing the vector graphics into the frames of an animation movie;  
5 downloading the frames of the movie from the server to the client; and  
selectively overlaying the frames to display different themes.

5 8. The method of Claim 7 wherein the themes include maps comprising an outline of a region and areas of different colors within the outline, and the method includes the steps of:  
preparing a color-coded frame by drawing a polygon around one of  
5 the maps, drawing a straight line between each color transition along the outline and the polygon, erasing the outline and the straight lines, and filling in the areas between the straight lines with the colors from the areas of the map between those lines;  
preparing a frame containing the outline of the region; and

10 displaying the color-coded frame in a layer beneath a layer containing the outline, with the layer containing the outline masking off the colored areas outside the outline so that the map is displayed as comprising the areas of different colors in the shape of the region.

9. The method of Claim 8 further including the step of displaying another layer containing the outline with the other layers so that the map is displayed with a visible outline of the region around the areas of different colors.

10. The method of Claim 8 including the step of preparing a plurality of thematic frames which can be selectively displayed with the layer containing the outline to display different themes for the region.

11. The method of Claim 7 wherein the themes include a map of a geographic area with an icon displayed thereon representing a link to a location on the Internet from which a video clip containing information relating to the area can be downloaded, and the method includes the steps of  
5 downloading and playing the video clip upon selection of the icon.

12. The method of Claim 7 including the steps of downloading the frames in a predetermined order, detecting a request for a frame by the client, and altering the order of the download to start downloading one or more frames immediately upon request by the client.

13. In a system for transferring thematic information over the Internet between a server and a client:

a source of vector graphics for different themes;

5 means for importing the vector graphics into an animation movie comprising a menu and a plurality of overlays that can be accessed by selecting topics on the menu;

means for downloading a menu file from the server to the client;

means for downloading data files for the overlays from the server to the client in a predetermined order;

10 means for interrupting the download if the client selects a topic for which the data file has not yet been downloaded and immediately starting to download the data file for the selected topic; and

means for displaying overlays corresponding to topics selected from the menu by the client.

14. The system of Claim 13 wherein the means for interrupting the download and immediately starting to download the data file for the selected topic includes means for detecting the selection of a topic, and means for determining whether the data file for the selected topic has already been  
5 downloaded.

15. The system of Claim 13 wherein the themes include maps comprising an outline of a region and areas of different colors within the outline, and the system includes:

5 means for preparing a color-coded overlay by drawing a polygon around one of the maps, drawing a straight line between each color transition along the outline and the polygon, erasing the outline and the straight lines, and filling in the areas between the straight lines with the colors from the areas of the map between those lines;

10 means for preparing an overlay containing the outline of the region; and

means for displaying the color-coded overlay beneath the overlay containing the outline, with the overlay containing the outline masking off the colored areas outside the outline so that the map is displayed as comprising the areas of different colors in the shape of the region.

16. The system of Claim 15 further including means for displaying another layer containing the outline with the overlays so that the map is displayed with a visible outline of the region around the areas of different colors.

17. The system of Claim 15 including means for preparing a plurality of color-coded overlays which can be selectively displayed with the overlay containing the outline to display different themes for the region.

18. The system of Claim 13 wherein the themes include a map of a geographic area with an icon displayed thereon representing a link to a location on the Internet from which a video clip containing information relating to the area can be downloaded, and the system includes means for  
5 downloading and playing the video clip upon selection of the icon.

19. In a method of transferring thematic information over the Internet between a server and a client, the steps of:

providing vector graphics for different themes;

importing the vector graphics into an animation movie comprising a  
5 menu and a plurality of overlays that can be accessed by selecting topics on the menu;

downloading a menu file from the server to the client;

downloading data files for the overlays from the server to the client in  
a predetermined order;

10 interrupting the download if the client selects a topic for which the data file has not yet been downloaded and immediately downloading the data file for the selected topic; and

displaying overlays corresponding to topics selected from the menu by the client.

20. The system of Claim 19 including the steps of detecting the selection of a topic, and determining whether the data file for the selected topic has already been downloaded before interrupting the download.

21. The method of Claim 19 wherein the themes include maps comprising an outline of a region and areas of different colors within the outline, and the method includes the steps of:

5 preparing a color-coded overlay by drawing a polygon around one of the maps, drawing a straight line between each color transition along the outline and the polygon, erasing the outline and the straight lines, and filling in the areas between the straight lines with the colors from the areas of the map between those lines;

10 preparing an overlay containing the outline of the region; and displaying the color-coded overlay beneath the overlay containing the outline, with the overlay containing the outline masking off the colored areas outside the outline so that the map is displayed as comprising the areas of different colors in the shape of the region.

22. The method of Claim 21 further including the step of displaying another layer containing the outline with the overlays so that the map is displayed with a visible outline of the region around the areas of different colors.

23. The method of Claim 21 including the step of preparing a plurality of color-coded overlays which can be selectively displayed with the layer containing the outline to display different themes for the region.

24. The method of Claim 21 wherein the themes include a map of a geographic area with an icon displayed thereon representing a link to a location on the Internet from which a video clip containing information relating to the area can be downloaded, and the method includes the steps of  
5 downloading and playing the video clip upon selection of the icon.

25. In a system for transferring thematic maps over the Internet between a server and a client:

a source of thematic maps in a vector format including an outline of a region and areas of different colors within the outline;

10 means for importing the outline into one frame of an animation movie;

means for preparing a color-coded frame by drawing a polygon around one of the maps, drawing a straight line between each color transition along the outline and the polygon, erasing the outline and the straight lines, and filling in the areas between the straight lines with the colors from the areas of the map between those lines;

15 means for downloading the outline frame and the color-coded frame from the server to the client; and

20 means for displaying the color-coded frame in a layer beneath a layer containing the outline, with the layer containing the outline masking off the colored areas outside the outline so that the map is displayed as comprising the areas of different colors in the shape of the region.

26. The system of Claim 25 further including means for displaying another layer containing the outline with the other layers so that the map is displayed with a visible outline of the region around the areas of different colors.

27. The system of Claim 25 including means for preparing a plurality of thematic frames which can be selectively displayed with the layer containing the outline to display different themes for the region.

28. In a method of transferring thematic maps over the Internet between a server and a client, the steps of:

providing thematic maps in a vector format including an outline of a region and areas of different colors within the outline;

5 importing the outline into one frame of an animation movie;

preparing a color-coded frame by drawing a polygon around one of the maps, drawing a straight line between each color transition along the outline and the polygon, erasing the outline and the straight lines, and filling in the

10 areas between the straight lines with the colors from the areas of the map between those lines;

downloading the outline frame and the color-coded frame from the server to the client; and

15 displaying the color-coded frame in a layer beneath a layer containing the outline, with the layer containing the outline masking off the colored areas outside the outline so that the map is displayed as comprising the areas of different colors in the shape of the region.

29. The method of Claim 28 further including the step of displaying another layer containing the outline with the other layers so that the map is displayed with a visible outline of the region around the areas of different colors.

30. The method of Claim 28 including the step of preparing a plurality of thematic frames which can be selectively displayed with the layer containing the outline to display different themes for the region.

31. In a system for transferring thematic maps over the Internet between a server and a client:

5 means for creating a thematic map of a geographic area with an icon displayed thereon representing a link to a location on the Internet from which a video clip containing information relating to the area can be downloaded; means for transferring data for the map from the server to the client; means utilizing the data for displaying the map with the icon; and means for downloading and playing the video clip upon selection of the icon.



32. In a method of transferring thematic maps over the Internet between a server and a client, the steps of:

creating a thematic map of a geographic area with an icon displayed thereon representing a link to a location on the Internet from which a video

5 clip containing information relating to the area can be downloaded;

downloading data for the map from the server to the client;

displaying the map with the icon, utilizing the data that has been downloaded; and

downloading and playing the video clip upon selection of the icon.

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